



## Deborah Little

*Highly Specialised Speech & Language Therapist*

Health and Care Professions Council number: SL20045

Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists registration number: RC0020403

### **Personal Profile**

I am a dedicated, passionate and experienced Speech and Language Therapist specialising in supporting children and young people and in the field of AAC. I am passionate about creating inclusive, Total Communication environments where every child's voice is heard and valued and in which people can make the communication connections that matter most to them. I thrive on collaboration, innovation, and sharing expertise and have led NHS service improvement initiatives including founding *Simply AACe!* a local communication club for children and young people who use AAC to attend, together with their families. I am also an alumni of the NHS Education for Scotland AHP Career Fellowship and through this programme led an initiative to embed use of Aided Language Stimulation approaches within education settings across Dumfries and Galloway.

### **Professional Qualifications**

2009 – 2010 Manchester Metropolitan University, Paediatric Dysphagia · Post Basic Course, Pass

2002 – 2006 University of Strathclyde, Speech and Language Pathology · BSc (Hons), First Class

### **Employment History**

**ATtherapy, Highly Specialised Speech & Language Therapist · October 2025 - Present**

I am based in Dumfries, Scotland and can work with clients across Scotland and the North of England. In my current role, I provide specialist assessment and therapy support for people with communication difficulties including those who benefit from using Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC). I also support people who experience difficulties with eating, drinking and swallowing (Dysphagia).

**NHS Dumfries and Galloway, Highly Specialist Speech and Language Therapist and Clinical Lead for AAC & Total Communication · February 2023 - October 2025**

In this newly developed role, I led a small team of Speech and Language Therapists and Speech and Language Therapy Support Workers/Assistant Practitioners to set up and deliver a child centred AAC service as part of a wider NHS community-based team. I delivered therapy support to children and young people (CYP) aged between 0-18 working within the local hospital, schools, family homes and community settings. A large part of this role focused on facilitating the development of Total Communication environments, particularly within school settings and rolling out a Specific Language System First approach as a foundation to enable all children to access AAC as regularly as possible within everyday environments. I championed improvements which led to the removal of barriers to accessing AAC and advocated for increased access to AAC for neurodivergent clients. During this time, I led the creation of a local community based AAC club for children and their families to attend and partnered with Third Sector organisations to provide opportunities for AAC support to be integrated with access to the arts. Working within a multi-disciplinary team was a central part of this role and together with MDT colleagues, I led various Quality Improvement projects focused on measuring the impact of therapy support to enable positive changes in service delivery.

**NHS Dumfries and Galloway, Highly Specialist Speech and Language Therapist and Clinical Lead for Paediatric Dysphagia · September 2018 - February 2023**

In this role, I worked with a caseload of CYP aged between 0-18 supporting both Dysphagia and communication skills. I worked across acute and community settings, including within the local Neonatal Unit. I led the local implementation of the SOFFI (Supporting Oral Feeding in Fragile

Infants) approach within the Neonatal setting and for young children following discharge from hospital. I developed a particular interest in the identification and effective management of Feeding Aversion and set up a local pathway to improve therapy support for this client group. I supervised our small team of Dysphagia trained SLTs, prioritising a compassionate leadership and child centred approach.

#### **NHS Dumfries and Galloway, Specialist Speech and Language Therapist (Advanced) · July 2009 - September 2018**

Working with a community based, paediatric caseload I worked across education settings and within family homes. I supported CYP with a range of communication difficulties and diagnosis and delivered therapy at an individual level and indirectly through working with parents and consulting with communication partners. As an integral part of clients' therapy journey I regularly delivered training, wrote comprehensive reports, carried out holistic assessments and made therapy recommendations anchored in what was most meaningful to clients.

#### **NHS Dumfries and Galloway, Speech and Language Therapist · November 2007 - July 2009**

As a community based SLT, I delivered clinic-based support across multiple rural locations with outreach to schools and family homes. I worked with clients from initial assessment through to discharge, conducting assessments, delivering therapy and reviewing progress.

#### **NHS Grampian, Speech and Language Therapist · July 2006 - November 2007**

As a newly qualified SLT, I worked with CYP at pre-school and school aged level. I developed a particular interest in working with children who stammer and was fortunate to partner with the British Stammering Association to deliver stammering therapy combined with outdoor education in the North of Scotland. I regularly delivered group-based therapy, designed to support specific speech and language skills and also focused on enabling peer support, particularly for teenagers.

- Supporting Oral Feeding in Fragile Infants (SOFFI)
- PODD Communication Book Training
- Signalong
- Talking Mats Foundation Training
- Talking Mats Licenced Trainer training
- Intensive Interaction
- Michael Palin Centre Parent Child Interaction
- British Stammering Association – Swindon Stammering Approach
- Lidcombe Programme
- Working with Selective Mutism (Maggie Johnson)
- Literacy Lessons – TeachUsToo
- Shared Reading and AAC
- Predictable Chart Writing and AAC
- Kirkpatrick MacMillan Leadership Programme (NHS)
- Language Acquisition through Motor Planning (LAMP)
- Supporting Emotional Regulation with AAC
- Care Aims
- Various training sessions related to AAC vocabulary packages and software and regular attendance at Clinical Excellence Networks, conferences and study days.

#### **Additional Skills**

- Selected as a UK Assistive Technology Scholar for 2025, <https://acecentre.org.uk/blog/meet-the-2025-at-scholars>
- Presented at Communication Works North 2025: Using A Modelling Approach to Embed Talking Mats within one School Setting
- Scottish Health Awards Finalist 2024 – Allied Health Professional Award

- Talking Mats Licenced Trainer (see recent blog: <https://www.talkingmats.com/time-to-think>)
- Clinical Tutor for undergraduate BSC SLT students with University of Strathclyde (since September 2023)
- Action Learning Set Facilitator as part of the AHP Fellowship Alumni for AHP Career Fellows with NHS Education for Scotland
- Presented at the Sensory Projects Online Conference 2023 discussing a joint initiative with third sector colleagues (Paragon) supporting CYP to explore their identity as musicians while using their AAC equipment
- AHP Career Fellow 2019-2020; (involving completion of a work-based Quality Improvement project funded for one year by NHS Education for Scotland) my fellowship animation can be viewed at <https://vimeo.com/453987605> and associated blogs at <https://ahpscot.wordpress.com/2019/08/12/building-bridges-and-new-horizons/> and <https://ahpscot.wordpress.com/2022/12/19/keeping-the-fire-burning-5-tips-to-maintaining-momentum-within-quality-improvement-projects-by-deborah-little-deb84slt/>



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